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AUTHOR Kramer, Howard C.
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ABSTRACT

Ways that academic advising can be used to foster cohesion in the college are addressed. Advising is assumed to contribute to the primary mission of the institution, the pursuit of scholarship. The question at issue concerns the types of efforts directed toward differentiation and specialization in contrast to efforts designed to increase integration in the institution. To better link people in the college and increase cohesion and community at the institution, it is necessary to characterize the people and culture that constitutes the faculty, and to identify faculty needs. Reasons that faculty may voluntary participate in the advising program are discussed, including satisfaction from the helping role, feeling the competence needed in coping with advising students, changing work functions, establishing peer relationships that provide a forum for mutual exchange, and mid-career realignments. Five levels or types of interaction described by Fry and Pasmore in their work with executives may be used to characterize different types of interactions between advisors: single-frame, multiple-frame, frame-linking, frame-sharing, and frame-breaking. These types of interaction characterize a process by whch changes in thinking and action can occur. (SW)

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Advising:

Supporting the Academy

Howard C. Kramer

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Research findings should be used not only to demonstrate what occurs but to suggest what is possible if human beings are considered from a particular perspective. In other words, research evidence may provide a view of what people, and their organizations, might become- in short, a model to aspire toward. (1) Consequently, one benefit derived from the systematic scrutiny of colleges and universities is the continued regeneration of the academy.

The general mission of academic institutions consists of the pursuit of scholarship, namely, the accumulation and dissemination of specialized or expert knowledge. Undergraduate education involves the systematic transference or transmission of this knowledge to students. One underlying assumption is that this effort of individuation, that is learning on the part of particular students, is accompanied by an integration of the components of the knowledge that is accumulated. Further, the institutional ethos commonly assumes that learning is based on prior accomplishments and proceeds in an orderly fashion. In other words, prior learning is a prerequisite for additional learning.

Normally research and learning occur in a group or in a sharing situation. The sense of academic community arises from a necessary 'contract' or agreement to teach, learn, and work together. This quality of 'community' is not something added to or separate from the learning process but an inextricable part of that process. In effect, if we fail to appreciate that learning, research, or teaching takes

place in a complex human interaction we are neglecting the situation in which it occurs. (2)

What are the implications for undergraduate education of some of the environmental transitions that confront colleges and universities. For the immediate future, for example, the characteristics of students who attend college, as well as the size of the applicant pool from which they are drawn, will undergo substantial change. Also, higher education faculties are aging with "middle age" or older the norm in many institutions. Finally, through systematic inquiry we are learning more concerning the developmental distribution among faculty, that is learning more of differences in the rate or pace of the emergence of developmental tasks of life among faculty as well as the realization of differences in the life cycle position of the various groups of individuals that comprise a faculty.

This paper examines how the function of academic advising may be viewed as a pivotal, rather than peripheral, component of an institution's educational mission. From a critical examination of the function of academic advising what might be offered as the contribution of academic advising? Is the practice of advising merely a service for students? Do benefits accrue to the faculty advisor? Does the presence of advising provide significant outcomes for the institution? This paper discusses how advising may be used to provide a significant contribution to the primary mission of the institution, that is, the pursuit of scholarship.

Weick argues that a basic conflict common to the university is an incompatible mixture of pressures between cohesion and accuracy. (3)

Cohesion, or the thrust toward community, is evidenced in the concern for the development, maintenance, and improvement of the ecology of the institution. Cohesion is the "glue" that binds or bonds persons together in their shared mission. Accuracy, or scholarship, reflects interest in the advancement of knowledge, that is the inclination within persons, as well as in the institution , for the acquisition of specialized knowledge. This unrelenting press for definitiveness, for individual achievement, is the primary task for the institution. The question at issue concerns the appropriate constellation of effort in the organization directed toward differentiation, toward specialization, in contrast to effort designed to increase integration in the institution.

One main source of data about what is revered in an organization has been what Pettigrew calls the "symbols" of the organization - the myths, legends, rituals and displays which contain, as encoded messages, some of the most sacrosanct of the organization's cultural meanings. (4) Language itself is perhaps the most important symbolic offering of culture, containing a wealth of information about social meanings. Readers may conduct their own informal data collection in their institution by noting what faculty and academic staff talk about when they congregate in groups, whether in locker rooms, at social functions, in hallways, at informal gatherings, or prior to the start of scheduled meetings.

More often than not the content of the discussion or exchange focuses on topics concerning accuracy/scholarship, as opposed to cohesion/community, within the institution. Talk that focuses on planning and preparing for scholarly activity, such as conducting

research projects, preparing manuscripts and presentations, and arranging travel to carry out scholarship, represents a form of differentiating activity. The pursuit, and completion, of these functions are definitive actions that differentiate between persons. Notable by its conspicuous absence from many of these conversations is any focus on integrative or prosocial activities, actions that serve to link persons in the organization to one another or to increase the degree of cohesion or community present in the institution. Who are the people that talk about scholarship, accuracy, achievement, and other aspects of definitive accomplishment? How might we characterize the people and the culture that constitutes the faculty?

Characteristics of Faculty

The second most obvious statistic about the predominately male professoriate is that college faculties are aging. In 1978-79 the median age of college faculty was forty-five and researchers predict the figure will continue to rise until the end of the century. (5) Any policy considerations undertaken in today's higher education academies must incorporate implications derived from this sociological reality.

Another distinguishing factor that influences this population is that for the vast majority of institutions the academic culture is typically biased in favor of content/knowledge development over process/skill development. Consider, for example, differences in budget allocation and organization prestige between departments of science and those of humanities or the arts in most institutions. This priority of formal development, in contrast to functional

development, is the essence of scholarly activity. Formal development is the elaboration and organization of personal knowledge into systems of increasing complexity. (6) This search for and production of valid knowledge underscores the concern for accuracy echoed by Weick and constitutes, in the eyes of many academicians, the most important mission of the institution. This passionate pursuit of definitive knowledge is not without undesirable consequences.

Efforts at greater differentiation through research and scholarship may undermine the minimal local social system network necessary for the preservation and dissemination of research findings. In other words, the scholar's quest for truth is also aided by one's integration with some community of colleagues. Mutual monitoring within and across disciplines, and the offering of penetrating criticisms and suggestions for revision can only be achieved within a common mutually-respecting disputatious communication network. (7) Scholarship requires some degree of association with others. Actions that neglect cohesion in the community threaten the retention and improvement of accurate knowledge and encourage anomic disorientation. (8) At the individual level other undesirable consequences are likely. Ironically, the cardinal, mythical characteristics of the academic personality (i.e., godlike, enabled, inscrutable, tragic, and lonely), as valued and positive characteristics of academic, are indistinguishable from the common danger signals of midstage alcoholism. (9) A question of more than passing interest is, therefore, what are some of the needs experienced by faculty? The establishment of a sense of priorities, together with a clear theoretical framework for development, provides a concrete basis for formulating realistic developmental objectives and the effective and

long-term promotion of a developmental culture, designed both to assist individuals and the organization of which they are a part.

Needs of Faculty

At present the majority of faculty are between 35 and 45 years of age. By the end of the present decade estimates are that over 35 percent will be over age fifty-five. (10) What are the developmental needs of faculty? Whatever their field of expertise, mid-career faculty members need opportunities to identify new professional endeavors, to experiment with new roles, and generally to expand their overall career horizons. In other words, they need to get involved in activities that will keep them excited about their work in higher education. (11) On the other hand, senior faculty members have slightly different needs. According to Erikson's theory of human development,(12) a principal task of adult development is the quest for a sense of generativity - a need to leave one's mark in some way. Faculty development efforts need to recognize this aspiration and provide the individual professor forms of assistance that facilitate achievement of this professional legacy.

Application of generalizations drawn from theories of adult development are, at best, hypotheses to guide thinking about the particulars of the individual and his or her situation. As an example, one of the characteristics associated with the midlife transition experienced by men is that, in contrast to earlier years, many became more nurturant and affiliative in their preferences and activities. In contrast, women who generally experience nurturant and affiliative themes earlier in life, may become more involved in

developing further those instrumental, autonomous, assertive or self-confidence building characteristics that are important to their professional advancement.

Development arises out of the interaction of the individual with specific situations. The advising coordinator may assist the advisor in this development effort by helping the advisor shape a response to the question, "what is it I'm trying to do in advising?" The benefits of having an answer to this question are simply the advantages of having a plan - a conscious, chosen, future-oriented frame of reference with which to organize one's self and one's behavior, to evaluate his/her effectiveness, and to guide any necessary adjustments.(13) In addition, the coordinator can share the vision of the culture of the institution, that is the interweaving of the achievement of the individual with the achievement of the organization, such that an accomplishment for either is perceived as a high value for both. In this case, advising may be viewed as contributing to the continuing professional growth of the advisor, an accomplishment for the individual, and simultaneously, contributing to cohesion-community in the organization, an accomplishment for the institution.

Advising and Institutional Mission

Earlier it was suggested that concern for cohesion or the development and maintenance of at least minimal conditions of community is significant because of its contribution to endeavors of scholarship. The creativity of others benefits us not only through our access to their creations but in the psychological effect their

work has on our activities in our own spheres of endeavor. (14) Within the university setting efforts to secure workable or functional cohesion must be attempted without sacrificing valid knowledge or of establishing constraints that hinder pursuit of valid knowledge. Where possible, institutions would prefer situations where both high cohesion and high accuracy may exist.

The challenge for the institution is to alter the probability of a highly preferred and generally more immediately rewarded response of pursuing scholarship to permit more time and attention to be accorded to efforts at shaping and maintaining cohesion. Institutional officials must strive to couple organization needs to faculty needs to increase the probability that organization business will be perceived by faculty as worthy of time and energy. One may expect that responses aimed at enhancing community will have an initially lower probability because they are less immediately rewarding. Although this low probability behavior of attending to cohesion or community does yield benefits it does so only at some later date. Kanfer's (15) discussion of the use of methods to develop self control as a means of shaping or training altruistic behavior has application here. At first, according to Kanfer, a motivational base other than the incentive of future benefit must be provided. In practice, this suggests that initial availability of external support and reinforcement to help the individual incorporate criteria for promoting community may be required. Thus, social approval or recognition by key members of the institution regarding the importance of community development or cohesion maintenance may provide such motivation to sustain the behavior which, initially, produces no immediate rewards. Faculty involvement in advising programs and

activities may be encouraged and rewarded because such participation leads to an increase in lateral relations within the institution. Lateral relations, according to Galbraith, provide informal links across different functional areas in the institution and increase the capacity to process information within the institution. In turn, the increased ability to process information contributes to the levels of cohesion and sense of community evident in the institution. (16) It is important to note that the conscious use of advising involvement as a means of facilitating personal interests of faculty and of meeting a goal of the organization does not preclude the search for other avenues. That is,the search for other organizational structures, processes or techniques, that may provide similar benefits for the individual as well as for the organization.

Rationale for Faculty Involvement

On what basis should the institution appeal to the faculty member for voluntary participation in the advising program? A convincing argument may be made that faculty participation is relevant because of the level of need for and the resultant benefits to the institution, to the advisor, and to the students who receive advising assistance.

In terms of the institution, advising serves as one means for the organization to maintain or improve the level of cohesion found in the academic community. The personal fulfillment of those that make up the community and the social objectives of the organization, that is the conduct of scholarship, are the beneficiaries. The potential of the prosocial behaviors and their associated reinforcers that are a part of cohesion improvement may provide a powerful counterforce to

the disabling effects of alienation, powerlessness, and loneliness that can pervade some portions of an academic community.

Being in a situation in which one's personal epistemologies and repertoires are dysfunctional is bound to be a little threatening. What meaning should the faculty member attribute to account for his or her involvement in the advising program? A person ordinarily takes actions appropriate to the meaning his causal interpretation gives to his own or others' behavior. (17) What meaning should the faculty member attribute to account for his or her involvement in the advising program? It is important to stress to the faculty member that when social behavior is voluntary, that is, when faculty choose to participate in advising, efforts to achieve personal well-being on the part of the advisor are, in fact, advanced by the promotion of the well being of others. In other words, the message for the advisor is that one helps oneself by helping others. Indeed the research is consistent in indicating that the synergistic fusing of personal interests and prosocial cooperation of helping others is most expressed by individuals with such characteristics as an integrated sense of identity, self-actualization, and principled moral reasoning. (18)

From another perspective the voluntary, and one hopes eager, participation in the advising program may be symptomatic of advanced levels of developmental functioning. For example, in Loevinger's theory on ego development,(19) characteristics of the autonomous stage that include coping with conflicting demands, exhibiting high tolerance for ambiguity and conceptual complexity, having respect for the need for autonomy on the part of others, and emotional

interdependence are indicative of an autonomous, mature adult. All are qualities, one might add, that add immeasurably to the competence required in coping with the opportunities found in advising practice.

Involvement by faculty in advising also may be construed as one form of work redesign of an academician's work load. Work redesign, or changes in one's work functions, may be helpful to the individual not because it introduces variety but because it evokes a new pattern of thinking. When people act, what they are doing can have multiple meanings. (20) These meanings have decisive effects on action because they influence its intensity and direction, which in turn, influence the probability that the action will modify the situation in self-confirming ways. Once the action is linked with an explanation, it becomes more forceful , and the situation is therefore transformed into something that supports the presumed underlying pattern. Where faculty view advising as a means of contributing to the cohesion within the institution, the act of advising itself assumes a greater significance. The more significance that is tied to the action, the more impact it has and, according to Weick, the more reciprocal activity it produces and the more meaningful the action becomes.

The peer relationships established by advisors provide a forum for mutual exchange in which an individual can achieve a sense of expertise, equality, and empathy that is frequently absent from traditional mentoring relationships. These peer relationships may be especially rewarding for middle career or late career professors. For mid-career persons, according to Kram and Isabella,(21) those in their 40's and 50's, are concerned with reworking old issues or learning new ways to approach situations in life and career through their

relationships. Individuals in mid-career have substantial histories established, histories shaped by the choices made and passed up, and situations dealt with effectively or ineffectively. Mid-career is known to be a time for reevaluation and rethinking of those choices and events. Mid-career is also a time according to the authors, when individuals increasingly depend on others to help them accomplish the tasks of the organization.

The authors go on to suggest that in late career, as individuals progress through life and enter late adulthood and career, peer relationships may take on a unique role, aiding the gradual movement into retirement. These special peer relationships may become mechanisms that enable the individual to assume a more consultative role, to pass on major responsibilities to younger colleagues, and to prepare psychologically for retirement (p. 128). As people progress developmentally, their thinking becomes more complex and paradoxically, also more precise and specific. Correspondingly, they become increasingly able to empathize with others who hold conflicting views, to accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions, to act on perceptions of mutual interdependence, and to tolerate higher levels of stress and ambiguity. (22) The phenomenon of developing cognitive complexity thus is embedded in personality structures that constitute qualitatively different ways in which adults organize their inner and outer worlds and the meaning that they attach to that understanding. Colleges and universities will be more vital institutions if they respond to the changing developmental needs of their professors. (23) Only by helping faculty members to continue growing at each career stage can higher education institutions

maintain a vigorous intellectual climate and offer high-quality education.

Implications for the Institution

Continuing, and possibly accelerating, change in higher education poses both opportunities and problems. As the environment of a system becomes more complex, meaning that the environment is changing more rapidly in ways that could threaten the system's survival, the system must also become simultaneously more differentiated and internally more interconnected in order to continue to adapt. People in organizations evolve in their daily interactions with one another a system of shared perspective or "collectively held and sanctioned definitions of the situation" which make up the culture of the organization. (24) The departmental culture within which we work comprises certain superordinate values which direct our philosophy and goals, and certain rituals and roles which are part of our interaction process. The culture, once established, influences its creators and inheritors in certain ways of believing, thinking, and acting which in some circumstances can prevent meaningful interaction and induce a condition of "learned helplessness", that is,a psychological state in which people are unable to conceptualize their problems in such a way as to be able to resolve them. Now, more than ever, it is necessary to encourage all professors to continue growing professionally, to remain abreast of their fields, and to assume different roles and responsibilities as new initiatives are needed to preserve educational quality. (25) To be effective, faculty development programs must recognize the distinctive professional strengths and needs of professors at different points in their academic careers.

A key element in development is the systemic transformation that results from the integration of new data or additional knowledge. The variety and complexity of issues, options, and persons that constitute elements of an institution's advising program provide various combinations of challenge and support that can be important building blocks that may be used to facilitate personal development. For example, the manner in which the faculty advisor conceives of advising, that is, one's frame of reference about advising, is one construct that may be subjected to substantive change as a consequence of involvement in the advising program. Fry and Pasmore described five levels or types of interaction in their work with executives that may also be used to characterize different types of interactions that may take place between advisors in the institution. (26) These types characterize a mechanism or process by which changes in thinking and doing may come about.

These five types of interaction are labeled single-frame, multiple-frame, frame-linking, frame-sharing, and frame-breaking. Single-frame interaction has as its goal merely to communicate one's own sense of meaning to another person, not to change it, to debate it, or to reframe it. For example, telling another how one refers students for tutoring may be one example of single-frame interaction. In multiple-frame interaction, an opinion or idea is offered, a response is given, the degree of agreement is noted, a new idea or question is offered, and so on. There is no collective action or emergent new frame of reference shared by all. A discussion between advisors of their approaches of referral for students may serve as an example of multiple-frame interaction.

Frame-linking interaction is the third form of interaction. Beyond sharing and agreeing or not to frames presented, attempts are made to influence one another enough to bring together individual frameworks or positions. The various positions, knowledge, ideas, and experiences that make up the frames of reference of two or more persons need to be put together in order to derive a plan, a set of recommendations, new structures or a revised set of procedures. A group of advisors meeting to draw up institutional plans or policies regarding student referral would likely engage in frame-linking interaction.

Frame-sharing interaction, the fourth model suggested, focuses on the participants making collective sense of the setting or process the parties are currently engaged in. According to the authors, frame-sharing contributes to relationship building. It creates psychological closeness and confronts issues of influence and intimacy by exploring how each party interpreted a situation the parties experienced together. Here, advisor discussion of the relationship between an advisor's perception of one's own stage of development and one's choice of procedure or strategy for referring students for needed assistance would appear to qualify as an example of frame-sharing interaction.

The final type, frame-breaking interaction, focuses on the ability to rise above the immediate situation, go beyond current definitions of problems, and think past current solutions toward new visions, new conceptions of issues, and new questions. Whereas frame-sharing requires the parties to reflect on what and who they

are, frame-breaking requires reflection on what they are not. For example, advisor exploration about how the advising program contributes to institutional cohesion, how it hinders that cohesion, how the program, if altered, might advance that institutional goal of cohesion even further, or what advisors might do outside the advising program and their role of advisors to further institutional cohesion would seem to approximate one example of frame-breaking interaction.

These frameworks of interaction give concrete form to things which many of us may already know tacitly from experience. For example, most informal conversations among faculty and academic staff occur in single-frame or multiple-frame formats. Interactions with same-discipline colleagues and a few "significant others" generates frame-linking involvement with frame-sharing or frame-breaking occurring much less frequently. Faculty involvement in advising provides an interplay of outer-and inner-oriented experience-both of action and reflection. If the relationships (or integration) of new constructs (new differentiations) generate new frameworks, thereby transforming the system by making it more complex, then individual development occurs.

Epilogue

This discussion has focused on how advising may be used as one means of fostering cohesion in the university. Weick argued that universities trade cohesion for accuracy inasmuch as their legitimacy is grounded in the production of trustworthy, replicable knowledge. (27) There are at least four ways of responding to this framework for thinking about the system of the college or university.

First, one may reject the validity of the assertion concerning cohesion and accuracy. If this initial conceptualization about the institution were considered fallacious, all discussion about the alleged relationship between these two orientations would be, at best, a waste of time.

Second, one may concur that the construct describing the two orientations is, in general, descriptive. If, furthermore, one argues that current conditions that typify the institution's concern for cohesion and for accuracy are appropriate, then these conditions should not be altered.

Third, one may conclude that although the balance of institutional pressures toward cohesion and accuracy currently are inappropriate or unproductive, the culture of the organization that defines and supports these orientations is too resistant to be readily altered. (The term "culture" is here defined as the meanings or aspects of the conceptual structures which people hold in common and which define the social or organizational "reality".) Consequently, the level of active collusion between parties in the organization is deemed such that the organizational context that supports patterns of behavior is immunized from the influence of change or innovation.

Finally, one may conclude that cohesion is important to the scholarship mission of the institution and that efforts can, and should, be exerted to maintain, shape, or improve the effects of cohesion in the organization. Organizational culture can act as an

obstacle to change and problem resolution. Thus, the systematic exploration of how existing organizational structures,* in this case the advising program, may be used as a stepping stone to influence or alter culture, or to harness that culture's benefits for the institution, can help enhance both organizational efficiency and organizational effectiveness.

As advisors carry out their organizational mission, significant benefits also accrue to the advisor. Kanter's (28) suggestions about job criteria that allow people to gain institutional or organizational power in fact appear descriptive of advisor's efforts to foster institutional cohesion.

The first criterion is that the job permit activities that are extra-ordinary, that call for the exercise of discretion, planning, and innovation. Second, activities should make it possible that individuals may be singled out as responsible for contributing to the

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*The reader may initiate such exploration by substituting titles of other innovative institutional programs for academic advising when reading this paper. For example, programs of faculty fellows in undergraduate residence halls, resident faculty in student dormitories, interdisciplinary or team-teaching projects, common-learning or theme-centered course frameworks, or faculty involvement in new-student socialization efforts also may characterize organizational changes that indirectly influence levels of cohesion in the institution.

life of the institution. And finally, the job activities must be relevant to solving the pressing problems of the institution. The phenomenon of organizational learning or organizational change associated with the contribution of advising to organization cohesion occurs at the interfaces between persons, between organizational units, and between the institution and its external environment. The prosocial activity of advising provides some small measure of intrinsic and possibly, extrinsic benefits to the individual advisor. However, the activity may more accurately be characterized as a form of selfless behavior in which the individual assumes the organizational role and works for its welfare, that is, works to improve cohesion in the community.

Those who have responsibility for organizing colleges and universities should continue to pay regard to the concept of 'community', because its potential benefits are present in all the learning arrangements that are under their care and not merely in one isolated area.(29) If cohesion, or community, is, in fact, important to particular colleges or universities perhaps the advising program, and the advisors who perform that function, may provide an additional contribution to the organizational health, and productivity, of those academies.

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